

Suddenly a great star, like a sun, appeared high in the air over the temple . . . ; and a great song arose from the men in white. . . . At the farther end, a throne stood upon a platform. . . . On the throne sat a majestic-looking figure, whose posture seemed to indicate a mixture of pride and benignity as he looked down on the multitude below. . . . I made my way through the crowd to the front, while the singing yet continued, desirous of reaching the platform while it was unoccupied by any of the priests. . . . When I arrived on the platform the song had just ceased, and I felt as if all were looking toward me. But, instead of kneeling at its foot, I walked right up the stairs to the throne, laid hold of a great wooden image that seemed to sit upon it, and tried to hurl it from its seat. In this I failed at first, for I found it firmly fixed. But in dread lest, the first shock of amazement passing away, the guards would rush upon me before I had effected my purpose, I strained with all my might ; and, with a noise as of the cracking, and breaking, and tearing of rotten wood, something gave way, and I hurled the image down the steps. Its displacement revealed a great hole in the throne, like the hollow of a decayed tree, going down apparently a great way. But I had no time to examine it, for, as I looked into it, up out of it rushed a great brute, like a wolf, but twice the size, and tumbled me headlong with itself down the steps of the throne.

GEORGE MACDONALD, *Phantastes*.